

## INTERVIEWING

*The interview is the heart of the job search process, but it need not be a source of stress. With careful preparation and a confident attitude, you can clinch any job for which you interview.*

### GETTING STARTED

- **Know your strengths.** The two most desirable candidate qualities cited by employers are the ability to communicate effectively with others and to get along with different types of personalities. In addition to this, some other key traits employers value include intelligence, enthusiasm, flexibility, leadership, a high energy level, maturity, and skill. Although not everyone possesses all of these traits, it is imperative that you choose three or four in which you excel and that you are prepared to communicate these to employers.
- **Know your resume.** Most interviews today are behavioral/situational, meaning questions generally start with the phrase, "Describe a time when...". When answering such questions, you should be able to recall specific examples from your resume. For example, describe a project you lead that was wildly successful or a new idea of yours that was well-implemented. By thinking of specific examples of when you demonstrated your most marketable strengths, you will gain a competitive advantage and show that you are able to think quickly on your feet.
- **Know your employer.** It is essential to research the company with whom you are interviewing, and the internet makes that easier than ever. By reviewing the company's mission statement, products and services, history, and financial information, you can answer potential interview questions and form your own questions to be asked at the conclusion of the interview. Review the qualifications and desired skills specific to the position you are applying for, and mention these during the interview. This will show you have matched your skills to the company and position and, by targeting employer needs, you will show your seriousness about obtaining the position.

### THE INTERVIEW

- **Types of Interviews.** The three most common types of interviews you will encounter are (1) telephone screening, (2) group or panel, and (3) face-to-face. Telephone screening consists of a call from an interviewer to pre-screened candidates. When on a telephone interview, have job search records organized and handy and refer to your resume as needed. A panel interview consists of a group asking questions and evaluating qualifications. When on this type of an interview, direct your answer to the person who asked the question, but try to maintain eye contact with all members. Finally, a one-on-one interview is the most common. It helps to bring a positive attitude and to be courteous to everyone you meet, selling yourself as a great addition to the team.
  - **Making a Good Impression.** First impressions are vital to an employer, and the impression will linger throughout the entire interview. Attire should be conservative, minimal, and neat. Tie back long hair, and wear natural looking makeup. A firm, steady handshake and bright smile and introduction are keys to achieving the best first impression. An erect posture and plenty of eye contact are also very important. You should bring questions, a copy of your updated resume, and a notebook and pen to your interview to jot down any key points or issues that raise further questions. Always keep in mind the three "C"s on an interview: cool, calm, and confident. By listening to an interviewer and subtly mimicking their body language and verbal style, you will relate better to your interviewer and vice versa.
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## COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*The best way to ace an interview is to prepare and practice potential questions beforehand with a friend. Below are common interview questions and tips for answering them.*

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

- **Tell me about yourself.** You *will* be asked this question so you need to have a short two-minute statement already prepared in your mind. *Limit your response to work-related items unless instructed otherwise.* Talk about prior experiences that relate to the position you are interviewing for. Be careful that it does not sound overly rehearsed.
- **What experience do you have in this field?** Speak about specifics that relate to the position for which you are applying. If you do not have specific experience, get as close as you can, emphasizing your transferable skills.
- **Tell me about a time when you helped resolve a dispute between others.** Pick a specific incident. Concentrate on your problem solving technique and not the dispute itself.
- **What is one of your weaknesses?** The worst answers are (1) 'I work too hard' and (2) 'I am a perfectionist.' These are tired and overused. Instead, discuss a unique weakness that you can develop into strength and how you are already working to do this.
- **Why should we hire you?** The employer is looking for both a comparison to other candidates and for your personal selling points. When responding, review what makes you stand out, whether it is your enthusiasm, skill set, experience, or future potential.
- **Where would you like to be in your career five years from now?** Employers are trying to get a sense of your ambition, drive, and direction. Aim high in your goal-setting but make goals achievable in the relevant time period. They will be listening for responses relative to their needs.
- **What will bring to this company? What do you want to work for this organization?** This may take some thought and certainly should be based on the research you have done on the organization. Find out where they have been and where they are going. What are the current issues and who are the major players of this company? Remember, sincerity is extremely important here and will easily be sensed. Relate it to your long-term career goals.
- **Other questions along these lines include:** Tell me about a time when you had to deal with conflict on the job. Describe a time when your work was criticized. Have you ever been on a team where someone was not pulling their own weight? What did you do about it? What techniques or tools do you use to keep yourself organized?

ACCOUNTING FOR YOUR TIME AWAY – *Fair or not, many employers will worry when confronted with a gap in an interviewee's resume. It is best to answer the interviewer's concerns honestly and directly and then to redirect the conversation back to your skills.*

- **Are you concerned about your skills being outdated?**  
Although the interviewer may not use these exact words, be prepared for a question that addresses the potential skill gap issue. Use this line of questioning as an opportunity to demonstrate that you've done your homework and clearly understand the employer's needs. Then, provide an answer that demonstrates you have taken proactive steps to polish up your skills.  
If you really don't have the specific skill needed for the job, but it is one that you could quickly acquire, use an example from a previous job to demonstrate that you have a proven ability to quickly learn new skills. ([www.jobsandmoms.com](http://www.jobsandmoms.com))
  - **Have you made arrangements for the care of your children?**  
Although this is technically an illegal question and you would be entirely within your rights to refuse an answer, it is often easiest to simply deflect the question skillfully by responding, "That will not be a problem. I have excellent coverage in place. Now, tell me more about..."
  - **Other questions along these lines include:** How do you plan to balance work and family life? Please explain the gap in your resume.
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## INTERVIEWING (cont'd)

### INTERVIEWING DO'S:

- **Do** speak clearly and fairly slowly throughout the interview.
- **Do** maintain an appropriate amount of eye contact throughout so as to project your confidence. When there are multiple interviewers, alternate your attention between each, maintaining eye contact with each for 4 to 5 second intervals.
- **Do** ensure your body language is clear and appropriate but natural. You do *not* have to make any artificial gesture; *vocalizing* yourself clearly is what is most important.
- **Do** arrive in properly professional attire that is neat, conservative, and minimal.
- **Do** have questions prepared for when the interviewer asks if you have any at the end of the interview. Use this as a final chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the company by asking thoughtful questions. (Do not ask basic questions that could be answered simply by visiting the company's website!)
- **Do** project confidence and competence!!!

### INTERVIEWING DON'TS:

- **Don't** be afraid to pause before answering to collect your thoughts. A well constructed answer is worth it.
- **Don't** be afraid to smile! Smiles, again, project confidence and ease.
- **Don't** let an interview end early!
- **Don't** forget to follow every interview with a note thanking the interviewer for his time and consideration! Also, don't be afraid to send an email or make a call to update your resume while they are deciding – be persistent but not pesky to show that you really want this job!

### FOLLOW UP!!! Send a Thank You Note

Following the interview, the most important thing to do is send a thank you, either handwritten or emailed (if you do not have a home address), or ideally both! This note should be sent within 24 hours of the interview. It should be brief and concise but include key points discussed during the interview. Mention again what you can bring to the company and what you hope to get from the job experience. Finally, thank the interviewer for clearing up questions you have asked during the interview. Remember, this is your last chance to make a great impression and to show what you can do for the company.

### RESOURCES

- **Job Interview Questions:** *Provides helpful general information for all stages of the interview process including sample questions, salary negotiations, and more*  
(<http://www.jobinterviewquestions.org/>)
  - **Women for Hire: Job Interview Preparation and Advice:** *Targeted specifically towards women includes information on company research, how to handle difficult questions, thank-you letters and more*  
([http://www.womenforhire.com/advice/job\\_interview\\_preparation\\_and\\_advice](http://www.womenforhire.com/advice/job_interview_preparation_and_advice))
  - **Women Work! The Job Interview:** *Again, targeted specifically toward the female interview experience, a great source for interview information and tips*  
([http://www.womenwork.org/resources/tipsheets/job\\_interview.htm](http://www.womenwork.org/resources/tipsheets/job_interview.htm))
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